

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Janet Tahara Uehara

Janet Tahara Uehara, daughter of Kameo and Iwa Tahara, was born in 1925 in Hiroshima-*ken*, Japan.

Her father, a priest and teacher, brought the family to Lāwaʻi, Kauaʻi in 1935. He filled a vacancy at the Shinto shrine where he conducted ceremonies and blessings. Her mother taught sewing and cooking.

On the night of December 7, 1941, Kameo Tahara was removed from his home and detained at a facility in Kapaʻa, Kauaʻi. Later, he was moved to Sand Island Detention Center on Oʻahu.

Iwa Tahara's son by a previous marriage, Shigeo Fujino, a Shinto priest at Nāwiliwili, Kauaʻi, was similarly detained.

In late December 1942, Iwa Tahara, her daughter, and daughter-in-law (spouse of Shigeo Fujino) were given only three days' notice to pack their belongings for their removal to Honolulu and the U.S. Mainland.

Arriving in Jerome War Relocation Center, Arkansas, in January 1943, the women were disappointed not to see their men. The men remained incarcerated at several camps before being sent to Arkansas about a year and a half later.

As Jerome War Relocation Center was about to close, the Fujinos and Taharas were sent to Tule Lake Segregation Center in California. Shigeo Fujino was an ardent supporter of Japan; Kameo Tahara had expressed a desire to return to Japan.

At war's end, the Fujinos settled in Japan. But, with a change of heart, the Taharas returned to Hawaiʻi.

Kameo Tahara later assumed the priest's post at Kato Jinja in Honolulu.

Janet obtained U.S. citizenship. She and Richard Uehara raised four children. She has eighteen grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren.

Tape No. 57-9-1-12

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Janet Tahara Uehara (JU)

Honolulu, O‘ahu

August 31, 2012

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Janet Chieko Uehara. Session number one, August 31, 2012. And we’re here in Honolulu, O‘ahu. And interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto. And Mrs. Uehara, as I said, we’re going to start from way back. So first of all, what year were you born?

JU: Nineteen twenty-five.

MK: And where were you born?

JU: Hiroshima, Japan.

MK: Okay. And tell us about—oh, first, what was your father’s name?

JU: His name was Kameo Tahara.

MK: Uh-huh [yes]. And what do you know about his life in Japan?

JU: Well, in the province, he had—I mean, he was a priest for one church called, “Hachimangu.” We were kind of comfortable, I guess. The kids would come and clean your yard for you and—you know, the school kids. (MK chuckles.) They take care of us. We didn’t have to buy any groceries or like that. People would bring—you know, the neighbors would give you. So we had kind of comfortable life.

MK: And where was that Hachimangu temple—shrine?

JU: In---it’s the next town to where I lived, but it’s called, “Ashina-gun.”

MK: Okay. And your mother, what was her name?

JU: Iwa Tahara.

MK: And you were telling us that she had been married before.

JU: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Tell us about that.

JU: Yes. I guess they were the first immigrants, I think. You know, her husband and my mom. They came to Kaua‘i plantation. I don’t know what her husband did but my mom, she was working for Robinson & Gay—Gay & Robinson. She was a maid. She used to cook and do things for them. So when she was in Japan, she used to always say, “Gay, gay.” I didn’t even know what that meant until I came to Kaua‘i. Then I found out she was working for, you know, the Robinson family. And she brought home—I guess she

- got an old *holokū* from, you know, Gay, I think. And the hat and everything. (Chuckles) She was kind of flashy in Japan, you know, our province. She wasn't bashful, I guess, to our PTAs because she used to wear that *holokū* and the hat. (Laughs) So she was kind of famous for that (laughs) in (Japan).
- MK: And then, so she was married, and she was on Kaua'i, working for the Gay family.
- JU: Yeah. Then her husband passed away. She had two children—two boys. The older one was ten, and the younger one was two. So she took two of them to Japan, you know, our province.
- MK: And then . . .
- JU: And then, I guess she met my father. Then, they got married. She said, after fourteen years they been in Japan, and then, she came to Hawai'i again.
- MK: Okay. And would you know the name of the first husband?
- JU: (Chuckles) No, I don't know.
- MK: Okay, okay. And besides your mom wearing the *holokū* (JU chuckles.) and the Western-style hat, what else, you know, was sort of like the result of her being in Hawai'i?
- JU: Well, she always talked good about Hawai'i. She always wanted to be in Hawai'i. She said, "It was a good life over here, too, you know." Then, we had an aunt living in Honolulu. She said there was an opening in Kaua'i—one church. You know, the reverend was going to go to Japan so there was an empty temple if we're interested. My mother quickly said she wanted to come to Hawai'i, so she encouraged my father to come. (Laughs) And that's how we came to. . . .
- MK: And you know, before we get too far into the future, you know, I wanted to know your life and your parents' life in Japan. You said a little bit about you folks had the church, and children used to come and clean up the yard, and you folks didn't have to worry about groceries.
- JU: Yeah, yeah.
- MK: Tell me a little bit about your life in Japan—your family's life in Japan.
- JU: Well, see, my father's church was another province from where my mother used to live. So he had to commute, you know, every day on a bicycle. (Chuckles) It was, I think, hard for him. (Laughs) My mom did a little bit farming. She had *hatake* and she had rice fields. We had property over there. So she didn't want to move to where my father was. My father (had) only a church; that's (all) he had over there.
- MK: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- JU: So, we stayed in my mom's province. I remember my brother used to help her do farming. I was too young to do anything. (Laughs)
- MK: And then, you know, what was the house like where you lived in Japan?
- JU: It was, you know, the grass-type house. It wasn't, you know, the *kawara* where the rich people live. (Laughs) I remember, we had *kura*, yeah. You know, where they keep the rice and the *miso* like that. My brother and my mom used to work hard to keep that place, you know, full all the time for the winter months. And I had fun when school was closed for the *taue*. You know, when they had the rice planting. So we used to help, and we used to have a lot of fun. (Laughs) They had good food for that occasion. (Laughs) Yeah.
- MK: Oh, so rice planting time, they . . .

JU: No school.

MK: No school. And would you folks—little kids, young kids go out and help too?

JU: Yeah, yeah. We plant rice.

MK: Oh, and then, how about harvesting time?

JU: Harvesting, no, we don't. The children don't help because it gets itchy. The husk, the rice. We had a machine that (do the work for you)—I don't know what they call that—that pick the grain off from the plants. They rent that and then, from house to house it goes. Going around to do that. It's a lot of work too, but we had fun. (Laughs)

MK: So your family had the rice. And you mentioned your mother had a *hatake*.

JU: Yeah, she had, you know, *konnyaku*?

MK: *Konnyaku*, yeah.

JU: She had that plant. She used to sell those *konnyaku*. People used to come and buy. It's like a lily plant. It's round like this. Just like round onion, but it's different color. Kind of grayish purple. It looks like a lily flower.

MK: Does it grow in like . . .

JU: Yes.

MK: . . . dry or wet place?

JU: Dry place.

MK: Dry place?

JU: Dry land, yeah.

MK: So she was growing the *konnyaku* plant. What else?

JU: Then, you know, green onions and vegetables. You know, about every day, you know, the things that we eat. And we had a lot of *kaki*, you know, the persimmon trees. We had about seven different kind of persimmon trees around the house. (Chuckles) My uncle next door, he had tobacco farm. So, you know, the bugs would eat the leaves, then they don't buy for good price when it's eaten like that—the leaves got to be perfect condition, so he used to hire us children for pick the worms. (JU and MK laugh.) We get the can, you know, and the kerosene or something (in it)—I don't know what that was inside there—and chopstick and we go around, row by row, picking the worms.

WN: With the chopstick?

JU: Yeah. (Laughs)

WN: And then you would put it into a can of kerosene.

JU: In a can.

MK: Oh, my goodness.

JU: I don't know how much, but anyway, we got paid for doing that. (Laughs) Yeah, and then we have to help him—you know, this (is hard work), yeah. You know, the rope that you make and it get one leaf inside [tape inaudible]. We do that again, and they put another leaf in, like a clothesline. They make a long one. Just like clothesline, they go rows by

- row, and they have to dry that. But when the rain comes, it's going to ruin and get moldy. So we have to watch for the rain all the time. Have to watch for my uncle. (Laughs) And if it rains---and we used to live on the hill. He used to live down below us. So we can see better when the rain come in, so we have to run down and help him put the---you know, the tobacco away. (Laughs)
- MK: Oh, so he dried the tobacco outside.
- JU: The olden days, I guess that's all they knew, I guess. (Laughs) The government would buy the tobacco from him.
- MK: And then, when your mother and your brothers were not working on the rice fields or with the *hatake*, what were they doing?
- JU: You mean my uncle folks?
- MK: Your mother and your brothers. You know, when it's not rice planting time or harvesting time.
- JU: Oh, oh. No, they don't have anything else to do. So wintertime, you know, persimmons, yeah. They make dry one---they dried that. We also put that in *nawa*, you know. Then you have to put every---one, one, one, one. And then, we have to hang it to dry too. (Laughs) That was our job in the wintertime. (Chuckles)
- MK: And then, besides helping your uncle when the rains would come or picking the worms off the leaves, were you folks doing other work for your uncle?
- JU: No.
- MK: No.
- JU: That's all. (Chuckles)
- MK: And you know, because your father was a priest and he was commuting, how much did he help?
- JU: Not too much at home. (Laughs) Not too much because he would come home late at night. But sometimes, he'll be home but then---but he used to go---love hunting, yeah. So hunting season, sometimes he would come home and then he would go hunting. (Laughs) The parish people used to come and look for him because he wasn't there at the church. (Laughs)
- MK: Oh. Those days, what did he hunt though?
- JU: Pheasants and rabbit.
- MK: Pheasants and rabbit.
- JU: It was good. The rabbits are good. Jackrabbits.
- MK: And after he hunted the pheasants and the rabbits, was it for food?
- JU: My mom would fix it and cook for us. And you know, the---finding the bones in the rabbit---what they do, they smash it with a hammer, you know. They make like hamburger. I was thinking it's a wonder, they didn't punch our intestines or something. You know, they smash it real small with the bones and all. They make hamburger. They put it in the soup. Pheasant, well, of course, like *sukiyaki* or whatever.
- MK: And then, your family---did they have like chickens or pigs or . . .

JU: We only had chicken.

MK: Chickens. (JU chuckles.) So from the chickens, . . .

JU: We had eggs. Free eggs. (Laughs)

MK: And then, in your part where you lived, how about fish? Where would you folks get fish?

JU: River. You know, my brother would go fishing. All kind of fish in the river. There's even eel.

(Laughter)

But once in a while, peddlers would come. But they had mostly dried fish. They don't have fresh ones.

MK: And then, sometimes you hear about people going out to get mushrooms or . . .

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: . . . greens outside. How about your family?

JU: We had—what do you call?—pine trees. There has to be *matsutake* growing underneath the pine trees. So we have a mountain. When the season time, my brother and I have to go and camp over there because people would come and steal the—you know, the mushrooms. They scratch it all up and, you know, spoil the crop for next—following year, you won't have anything. So you have to watch. So I remember, I stayed with my brother, and then I had measles that time. (Laughs) So my mom had to come and pick me up. I have to stay home and—well, my brother has to stay. He was young and kind of—you know, the wind blowing and, you know, spooky a little bit. So I kind of pitied him that he stayed all by himself. (Laughs) But he's obedient. So he stayed all by himself. But we had one dog though.

MK: So just a dog and the two of you?

JU: Yeah, yeah.

MK: Up in the mountain?

JU: Yeah. (Chuckles) Kind of spooky. (Chuckles) The wind blowing, it makes funny kind of sound. Then, during the day, my mom would come and bring us food. (Laughs)

MK: Oh, wow. So . . .

JU: Because we lived way in the sticks, you know, the countryside. Hiroshima, but way inside even the [atomic] bomb [later] didn't affect over there. It was far away.

MK: And you know, it seems like where you lived, a lot of outdoors, right? You have farming land, you have the mountains, what did you folks do for play then?

JU: Well, not too much. We didn't have any ball game only *ojame*, you know, that . . .

MK: Play with the beanbags?

JU: Beanbags. Jump rope and things like that. Not too much games to do.

MK: How about playing by the river?

- JU: Yeah, we used to—you know, fireflies like that. We used to go and build a house for the fireflies with a straw. We used to catch fireflies. We had fun. (Laughs) It's by the riverside. The fireflies would come out (at night).
- MK: How about—what do they call it—*semi*?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We had lots of those. They're so noisy. (JU and MK laugh.)
- WN: What is that, cricket?
- JU: Summertime.
- MK: Did you folks catch them, too?
- JU: We used to catch those.
- WN: You said you made a box with the straw for the fireflies?
- JU: Yeah.
- WN: How big was that?
- JU: Maybe this size.
- WN: Size—oh, the size of a Kleenex box?
- JU: Yeah. My brother also had silkworm. They did silkworm. They eat day and night, the silkworms. They would eat and eat and eat. So you have to keep feeding, you know. Mulberry leaves. And then, it smells bad.
- MK: Yeah? (JU chuckles.) Oh.
- JU: So he has to stay in another place, you know. He cannot stay in our house because it smells bad and it gets dirty too. So we had another *koya* (a small house outside the main house or) building. That's where he stays and then feed—he used to sell the cocoon that the silkworm make. But you have to boil it, I think. It was so stink. (Laughs) Terrible smell. He had to boil it and then dry it, I think, and then sell the cocoon.
- MK: So your brother would gather the mulberry leaves. He would be feeding the silkworms. And then, when they would form the cocoons, he would boil the cocoons and then go sell that.
- JU: Yeah, yeah. Also, the government used to come and buy from you those things.
- MK: And then, how about your mom? Was she doing any silk processing the thread or weaving?
- JU: Only, she used to help with the leaves. She used to get for him leaves, but that's all. She wasn't involved in the other stuff. (Chuckles)
- MK: My goodness.
- JU: Because she was busy doing gardening or—and we had cow, too. So she had to go out and get grass for the cow. That was a chore for her. Every morning, she got (up) to get grass, yeah. Cut grass for the cow.
- MK: And then, like you were telling us, the house that you lived in—thatched roof, yeah?
- JU: Yeah.

- MK: Not *kawara*.
- JU: No.
- MK: You said *kawara* is for the rich people.
- JU: Rich people. (Laughs)
- MK: Yeah, thatched-roof farmhouse, yeah?
- JU: Uh-huh, uh-huh [yes].
- MK: What did it look like inside? I've only seen pictures of the outside of a Japanese farmhouse.
- JU: Only had a divider like. Only had maybe three rooms only. One big room just like a parlor, you know, and then, two bedrooms. That's all we had.
- MK: And then, when it came to cooking, where was the cooking done?
- JU: Inside, but you know, they have—what do you call that thing now? *Kudo*, yeah? (Laughs)
- MK: Mm-hmm [yes]. *Kudo*. Uh-huh, yeah.
- JU: See, I forgetting the words, too.
- MK: They had the *kudo*.
- JU: Yeah, and then they had the *nabe*—what do you call?—nowadays, I don't know what you call that thing. Already, I forgot how we used to call that. Then, she cooks in there. And then, the water was hard to get, but we had *ido*, you know, the spring water. Pond, we had. So that really helped us. Other than that, we had to get water from the river. Did the washing like that.
- MK: Whose job was that?
- JU: My mom. (Chuckles) She used to do all the washing, yeah. Stuff like that.
- MK: And then, how about the—for the cooking, you used firewood or . . .
- JU: Yeah, firewood. And that's my brother's job too. (JU and MK chuckle.) My father would help him if he's home. He used to go and get wood for us.
- MK: And like *o-furo*, where would that be?
- JU: Yeah, that's kind of outside but still underneath the main house. The (extended) roof, yeah. Kind of outside. We had the *furo* over there, and then we had to burn firewood also. That was my mother's stuff too. (Laughs)
- MK: She was busy, yeah?
- JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- MK: And then, like in Hawai'i, when people lived on plantations, they had like outhouses.
- JU: Yeah, yeah.
- MK: In Japan, at your place, how was that done? The toilet.

- JU: It was underneath the roof to the main house, but that was only for *furo* and for—we had another house for the, you know, for the bathroom. *Oshikko*, we had kind of inside the house but for other use outside the house.
- MK: Wow, you really lived in a Japanese-style farmhouse.
- JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- MK: Oh, wow. And you know, you mentioned that your house on top of a hill, you can look down and your uncle more down, who else lived around you folks?
- JU: We had neighbors. About ten, maybe, neighbors around us. They all did the same thing, farming, you know. They all had same things. (Chuckles)
- MK: Did any of them have fathers that did work outside?
- JU: No. Only their own farming.
- MK: Oh. And did you folks have like a *kumi*?
- JU: Yeah, they had. *Kumiai*.
- MK: Yeah, *kumiai*.
- JU: But I don't remember too much that they did. And then, we went to school. It's kind of far from my house—the school was. So wintertime, lots of snow, you cannot see the road, yeah? So my mom used to carry me on her back. She used to take me to school. I remember that. (Chuckles)
- MK: So in those days, what kind of transportation did your family have?
- JU: Nothing, only bicycle. (Chuckles) My father rode bike to commute from the next city to our city—our place. We used to see taxi once in a while. I don't know where that taxi was going to—the city—I guess, it would pass by our place. You know, the kids in school like the airplane. Once in a while, we see airplane too but so small up in the sky so small like a bird or something. The teacher would let us go out, and students could look at the airplane. (Laughs) That (was really) country, we used to live (that way). (Chuckles) Only once in a while, we see the cars and trucks pass by our house.
- MK: And then, you know, you were saying that your father—you know, he was a priest at the temple, yeah. I'm curious, like, what was the work of a priest? Shinto priest. What did he take care of?
- JU: Well, in New Year's, he had to go house to house for blessings. And the funerals, weddings, and once or twice a month, they had a service. People get sick, then they had prayers for them, so people would come and had to pray for them and things like that. And then, he taught school right next to—his church had Japanese school.
- MK: Oh, in Japan?
- JU: In Japan.
- MK: Oh, so he had a school there?
- JU: No, he was just one of the teachers.
- MK: So he was a Shinto priest and teacher in Japan.

JU: Yeah, but you know, my mom talks too much about Hawai'i, he was so interested in coming to Hawai'i. (Laughs) But he never regretted. He liked Hawai'i better than Japan. (Laughs)

MK: And you know, because your father was a Shinto priest, I'm wondering, how did people look at you folks? Like you folks were up?

JU: Yeah, kind of up, yeah. They respect us more, you know.

MK: And you know, you mentioned that you went to school. Sometimes in winter, your mom would have to carry you.

JU: Yeah. I went to my mom's province for the school. I didn't go to my father's side, you know, where he was staying.

MK: And what was it like going to school in Japan?

JU: Well, I guess it's so different from here, you know. They don't have anything over there, you know. Wooden floors and (chuckles) toilet, like that, all outside. So real country. (Chuckles) It wasn't anything special.

MK: In your class, about how many people were there?

JU: We only had about fifteen students.

MK: Fifteen?

JU: Yeah, my class, yeah.

MK: Boys and girls?

JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)

MK: And what kinds of things did you learn?

JU: Same, like history, arithmetic, and calligraphy, and *shūshin*. And they had—what do you call? *Gakugeikai*. We performed, too. You know, *shibai* used to do all kind of stuff. (Laughs) They used to have. . . . What do you call that now? *Hanashikata taikai*, you know?

MK: Oh, speech contest?

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah, had those things.

MK: How about *engeki*?

JU: Yeah.

MK: You folks had performances?

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was called *gakugeikai*.

MK: What kinds of things do you remember performing?

JU: (Chuckles) All from the fairytales, you know. [Folktales] I remember, my mom had to sew some clothes for our act, but I forgot what it was. (Laughs) *Hagoromo* and something like, you know . . .

MK: Folktales.

- JU: Yeah, that sheer fabric. And she used to sew on something. (Laughs)
- MK: Wow.
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: *Hagoromo* story?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- MK: How about . . .
- JU: Been a long time, I forgot already. (Chuckles)
- MK: How about like *undōkai*?
- JU: Yeah, they had *undōkai* also. That was fun. Yeah, I was a good runner. (Laughs)
- MK: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- JU: I used to go (to other schools with) my brother and (we) used to be good runners, so we used to represent our school, and we used to go to national province school to compete, yeah. I remember that. (Laughs)
- MK: Oh. You folks are real good then.
- JU: I don't know if we were good or what, but we used to race—relay, they used to call it. We used to do. (Laughs)
- MK: And then, in a Japan school, I've always wondered, how were the teachers? Strict? Not strict?
- JU: Strict. Very strict. (Chuckles)
- MK: How come you say they were strict?
- JU: I mean, every time you see them, we have to bow and, you know, *aisatsu*. If you forget book or something, you get the ruler, yeah. You get spanked. (Chuckles) And sometimes, we had to stand in the corner if we said something bad or something like that. The boys used to get spanking all the time. (Laughs)
- MK: And I know, you know, when sometimes people talk about Japanese school over here, they talk about *shūshin*. How about in Japan?
- JU: We had *shūshin* also, yeah. That was good, I think. Very important.
- MK: So like what kinds of things did they kind of emphasize in *shūshin*? What did they teach you?
- JU: Well, obey your elders, and respect your parents, and be honest. All of those things. Be helpful to others and things like that. And of course, you have to love your country. (Chuckles) Things like that. But I was kind of young. I was only in the fifth grade when I came, so I don't remember too much because I was only eleven when I came.
- MK: Yeah. And then, you know, because your father was a teacher—of course, different place—but did your parents expect you to be a good student?
- JU: I guess so. But I was just ordinary.

(Laughter)

I wasn't a smart student. I don't think so.

MK: And then, you know, as a daughter of a Shinto priest, what did you know about Shintoism?

JU: I know they believed in God. Something close to Christianity, you know. Yeah. You don't really die, but you have another life after you die. And I don't know what to say, but like I don't know about Buddhist—Buddhism, but I don't know if they (have) life after death. I don't know. But I know Shinto has.

MK: Oh, so even as a child, you had some understanding.

JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes]. You have to believe in God, yeah. There was a God.

MK: And then, in your house, did you folks have a *kamidana*?

JU: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, a big one.

MK: Big one?

JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)

MK: So not like the ordinary small . . .

JU: No, not the small one. No, we had the big one.

MK: Oh, what was on your *kamidana* at home—at your house?

JU: Had a mirror, yeah, *kagami*, and had a—what do you call?—got *sakaki*—you know, got the leaves. And they had that white paper stuff that they cut and make it—I forgot what they call it. Had that and they had necklace too. A priest always wears that.

WN: Was there a fox?

JU: Huh?

WN: Was there like a fox?

MK: Oh, you mean, *Inari-san*?

WN: Yeah, yeah.

JU: No.

WN: Is that *Inari*?

JU: No, that's Shinto, too, but another different (sect).

MK: A different one?

JU: Yeah, *Inari-san* is different, I guess.

MK: And then, I know that—would you give offerings at the *kamidana*?

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They had the *saisenbako*, yeah? Throw the *saisen* inside.

MK: Oh, at the temple.

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: But at home?

JU: At home, no.

MK: No food or anything?

JU: Well, we had some bowl with the fruits. New Year's, we have *mochi* like that. (Chuckles)

MK: That's interesting. It's really interesting. And you know, you mentioned a little bit when—how come you folks came to Hawai'i?

JU: My mom's sister was living in Honolulu. She found out that in Kaua'i, there was an opening at one temple. She used to go to Daijingu over here all the time in Nu'uano. She found out there's another branch in Kaua'i that the priest is leaving, yeah. That Reverend Kawasaki was there. Was it—not Nu'uano, but what street was that? Anyway, (chuckles) and then . . .

WN: Oh, Pū'iwa Road, yeah?

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: Okay.

JU: So my aunt would go over there all the time. And then, she found out there was a Reverend Kawasaki [loud noise, sentence unclear]. Would he be interested? He would like to see if he wanted to come. That's how we got started. She called us, and then my father was very interested because my mom always talked about Hawai'i. She was willing to come. She wanted to come to Hawai'i. (Laughs)

MK: And what did you think? Your mom wanted to come back to Hawai'i.

JU: Yeah, but I didn't care. You know, I was too young to really, you know, think about those things, I guess. I just followed them, you know. If they want to come, then I'll come too. (Laughs)

MK: And so, when your family came to Hawai'i, who came?

(Telephone rings.)

Oh, we'll let you just answer the phone.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

MK: Okay, we were just talking about your family coming to Hawai'i when you were eleven years old in 1936, yeah?

JU: Nineteen thirty-five.

MK: Nineteen thirty-five. And who came? Who came to Hawai'i?

JU: You see, my brothers were born in Hawai'i, right? You know, from—the father was here before. So they were citizens. So they came before us. So just my father and my mom and—three of us. We came together.

MK: And when you first came to Hawai'i, you landed in Honolulu.

JU: Yeah, at my aunt's house, you know. And then, she had Hawaiian neighbors. You know, the kids would talk to me. I think they were saying, "What's your name?" But my aunty

told me that they asking what is your name, but I don't know so I don't answer, yeah. (Laughs) So my aunty was telling them something. I did not know—not one English—not even one, you know, so it was kind of hard for me. And I went to Kalāheo Intermediate School from Lāwa'i. We used to live in Lāwa'i, and we went to Kalāheo. We had to walk about, I don't know, maybe two miles. I don't know. (Chuckles) I started kindergarten, yeah? Kindergarten. So—because I didn't know any English. But the kids were small, so they had small chairs. And I wouldn't fit in there. So the principal was so nice. He brought for me one bigger chair, yeah, to sit in. (MK chuckles.) He would check on me all the time to see if I'm getting better—any progress or what. So I was good in math already. I was already fourth grade or fifth grade, so I would help the teacher with the math, you know, like that. She would let me skip. He would let me skip grades as the years went. So I would go a little bit higher. I don't stay in the same class too long. That was nice of him. (Laughs)

MK: And what was it like for you, you know, going through that experience, you know?

JU: Yeah, I think, I didn't know from she to he, so I used to use (it at) wrong places. My friends used to correct me. When boys, you say, "he," and girls, you have to say, "she." (Chuckles) Don't get mixed up. They used to help me. That was nice of them. Yeah, I had nice friends. All Japanese children from Lāwa'i and Kalāheo, yeah.

MK: And you know, you already described to us what your house and area was in Hiroshima. What was it like in Lāwa'i?

JU: Oh, they had one house for you. You know, the temple—right next to the temple. So it wasn't a really nice house, but it was livable. It was okay. Those days, even in Lāwa'i, we didn't have to buy anything. They would bring rice—you know, a bag of rice that the people—(chuckles) and then, you have sake. Although my father doesn't drink, he had a lot of sake, you know? And always vegetables and fruits. They had plenty. So we don't have to buy those things. It was comfortable again.

MK: And then, the house itself—like in Hiroshima, you folks used firewood, you folks had to get your water. Cooking was, you know, on one part of the house. What was it like?

JU: Well, in Lāwa'i, too, we used to use firewood [tape inaudible]. But we had, you know, a kitchen. I don't know if we had electric stove. I really don't know. My mother just used to cook in those hibachi kind of stuff. (Chuckles) Wok-like stuff. That was okay. But everything was free, like—we had comfortable living.

MK: And then, like before, in Japan, your mom had the rice field, *hatake*. She had to have the children work on the—get the wood and take up things in the mountain. In Lāwa'i, what did she do?

JU: She start sewing and some cooking class. (Chuckles) Japanese sewing, yeah.

MK: Kimono?

JU: Yeah, kimono. Yeah, she did that. My father just stayed as a priest. He didn't teach school or anything.

MK: And then, again, the work of the priest in Lāwa'i—what was the work?

JU: Same like Japan, yeah? When people get married or funerals or they had service—like that. Same thing.

MK: And by this time, you were eleven years old. The temple is right there near your house. What responsibilities did you have in the house or in the temple?

JU: Not much. (Laughs)

MK: Not much? (Chuckles)

- JU: Just maybe I help him clean, you know, sweep or something like that in the temple. But not much. My father did all that. My mother would help him, so I just went to school. (Laughs)
- MK: And then, when you weren't in school, what were you doing?
- JU: (Chuckles) Not much too, but if I came a little bit older, I went to help with the cannery. You know, the pineapple cannery in Lāwa'i. I used to help the mothers with children—watch the children for them.
- MK: Oh.
- WN: So the mother—people who work for the cannery.
- JU: Yeah, yeah, cannery.
- WN: You babysat the children . . .
- JU: Yeah, yeah.
- WN: . . . while they worked.
- JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- WN: Oh.
- MK: How much did you get paid for that?
- JU: That was volunteer, but the mothers used to give me a little bit *kozukai*, yeah?
- MK: Yeah.
- JU: I used to like to do that. It wasn't a salary or anything but just volunteer (since my mother was working at the cannery).
- MK: So a little bit spending money for you.
- JU: Yes, spending money. And my mom, she worked a little while at the cannery too—at the pineapple cannery.
- MK: And then, when you folks moved from Hiroshima to Lāwa'i, did your—like what you folks wore—change too?
- JU: Oh yeah. (Chuckles)
- MK: Yeah?
- JU: Because we used to wear most—well, we had—summertime, we used to wear dress but only one dress that—you know, the whole summer, we're going to wear the same dress. (Chuckles) We washed and wear. The wintertime, too, we had uniform. Maybe we had two, yeah. But come over here, no more uniform. You wear whatever you want. So it was different. My mother wore kimono all the time, but in Hawai'i, she had to wear, you know, dress, yeah. (Laughs)
- MK: So not so odd if she took out her *holokū* anymore. (MK and JU laugh.) Oh boy. And then, you went to—you were going to Kalāheo, yeah? And how about Japanese[-language] school?

JU: We had—in Lāwa‘i, we had Japanese school. Lāwa‘i Japanese school. And Tashiros—the husband and wife, they were the teachers. I think (his) brother was from Hanapēpē. I think he was Ben Tashiro.

MK: Oh.

JU: (Ben Tashiro) was his brother.

MK: Yeah, well known, yeah?

JU: He was well known. Politics, yeah.

MK: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].

JU: I know he was up there, but I don’t know what he was. I don’t remember.

MK: How did you do in Japanese school?

JU: I was good.

(Laughter)

MK: I kind of don’t have to ask you that, yeah.

JU: It was easier for me. (Chuckles) Because, you know, Hawai‘i kids have hard time. (Laughs)

MK: So at Lāwa‘i Nihongo Gakkō, what grades were you in?

JU: Well, I started from fifth grade, I think. Then, I went up until, I think, [grade] ten or twelve, I think. That’s all it went. There was no more.

MK: And last time, you were saying that you were sent to Honolulu, but . . .

JU: Oh, yeah, because I finished—I graduated from the Japanese school in Lāwa‘i and didn’t have any more higher education, so my father wanted me to continue further education in Japanese. So he sent me to Honolulu. And my other—the older brother was living in Honolulu. So like he said, “You must go to the *gakkō* there.” (Chuckles)

MK: And where was your brother living?

JU: School Street. I don’t know the address over there but it was School Street—River and School, between there.

MK: And when you moved to Honolulu, what English school [public school] did you go to?

JU: Central Intermediate. I was going to Central Intermediate. And I was just learning how to swim. There was a Y over there close to the school, so you know, the teacher was teaching us how to swim. And then, the war—and I didn’t learn how to swim. So I don’t know how to swim. Even till today, I don’t know how to swim. (Laughs)

MK: So like how long were you at Central Intermediate?

JU: Not too long because I came September, I think. Then, the war started in December already. Not too long.

MK: Just short time, yeah? And this brother that you lived with, what was he doing?

JU: He was married with two children already, and he was working at (Pearl) Harbor as a sign painter. And then, war—I think the shrapnel or something got into him, and he was wounded. So he was at Tripler [Hospital], but they didn't let us know. So my sister-in-law was so worried that we don't know what happened to him. You know, December 7th. So after three or four days, then he came back to us. We didn't know where he was. We didn't know if he died or we didn't know what happened to him.

MK: That's a long time, yeah, not knowing.

JU: Mm-hmm, yeah. I was worried for my sister-in-law. I know she was worrying every day.

MK: And then, I guess we can get into December 7, yeah? You know, what do you remember? First of all, where were you December 7?

JU: I was in my brother's house in School Street. From where we lived, there was one teahouse. I was telling you. Natsunoya Teahouse. Right next to the botanical garden. That's this side. And then the river running down here. In between, there was a teahouse and some homes. There was a little alley going down. My brother lived in that alley over there, and it was very close (to the teahouse). We were looking at the teahouse like this every day. And so, I was studying for one test, I think, for the Japanese school. (Laughs) We had test, so I was really studying hard. Then, somebody told us, "Come out." They had maneuvers, you know, and real nice, you know. "Come watch."

So my (two nephews and my sister-in-law) all of us went up to watch, yeah, and some neighbors too. Then, we saw all the (planes), and you know, the *hinomaru*—the plane was passing. And they're shooting, but they're missing. They said, "Ah, that's the target, you know. The wrong one was there." (Laughs) "Oh, they miss again. They're missing." But it was so nice. It was a Sunday, and it was a clean, beautiful Sunday. And you know, the smoke—like gray, that kind, after the (sky). So beautiful. (Laughs) We said, "Wow, look at that (sky). So nice." We were so amazed at how nice it was for us.

And then, somebody said, "How come? Today is Sunday, and then they (have) maneuver." You know, usually, they don't do that on Sundays.

So somebody turned on the radio, and they said, "Hey, everybody, take cover. It's war. Japan attacking us." So everybody hurried down. You know, go home to your homes and that was it. Then, we heard so many people got killed, you know. From the shell, you know, flying all over the place.

MK: You were saying last time that a family friend died from the shelling?

JU: They were down by the River Street side, you know, and they still got hurt. You know, Vineyard Street, they had one small store over there. The husband and one daughter, I think, was watching the store, and then, they died. But my friend's daughter was good. She wasn't there at that time.

MK: Oh, and then, you know, you were telling us the story about your brother who was a sign painter at Pearl Harbor. So that day, he had gone to work?

JU: Yeah, I don't know why, but Sunday, he did go to work.

MK: And so, you folks, you and your sister-in-law, didn't know what happened to him for . . .

JU: No, we didn't know what happened to him.

MK: . . . for three days?

JU: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: And at the end of the three days or so, he . . .

JU: He came back.

MK: He came back. What did he tell you folks, if anything?

JU: I don't remember. He didn't tell me anything. But I know he was so scared, you know. (He told his wife what happened.)

MK: And . . .

JU: And that's all I remember.

MK: What—when you realized it was Japan attacking, what did you think or feel?

JU: I didn't feel good. (Chuckles) But I didn't know that, you know, they would take us away like that. I didn't feel anything like that, you know. Just (too) bad, you know, it's a war, yeah.

MK: And on Kaua'i, at that same time, what was happening?

JU: That night, my father was taken and my brother also. And he also was a priest in Nāwiliwili. He came before us, and he already had a place in Nāwiliwili Church. So he was also taken, and we didn't know where they went at first. They said—I think it's not called Kapa'a Jail, but we used to call it Kapa'a Jail because it's in Kapa'a. I think they had another name, but I'm not so sure. They were taken there right away. On that night, December 7, they were taken already.

MK: And how long were they over there in Kapa'a?

JU: Oh, maybe one week, two weeks? I really don't know. But they were sent to Sand Island, over here [on O'ahu]. And then, they were sent to Mainland, I guess. But we didn't know what happened. But I remember, one time, I think my sister-in-law went to Kapa'a, you know, Jail to visit them. And then, after that, we don't know what had happened.

MK: So all that time, when your brother and your father, you know, were taken, how did your mother and sister-in-law manage?

JU: Well, I guess, financially, I guess, they had hard time. But anyway, my sister-in-law had told my mom to come join her at Nāwiliwili because she was alone too. And they didn't feel good. So my mother joined her in Nāwiliwili. They wanted me to come home, but you know, especially I'm an alien, there were no plane those days. Only boat, but they didn't let me go home. So I stayed there for, what, kind of long time. Maybe six months later, I went home to Kaua'i.

MK: And how did you manage getting home?

JU: Well, I (was on the army transport ship). And there was another lady from Hanapēpē—an old lady. She and I in that boat, and they make sure they lock the (door)—all soldiers, yeah, on the boat. So lock the door tight. (Chuckles) And they're curious, you know. They looking at us. (Chuckles) And then, that's how we got home. I thought, I'll never go home, but I had chance. The immigration station had called me. I think my brother had reported that, you know, I wanted to go back, I think, to Kaua'i. But---and then, they called me, and I was able to go home.

MK: And you know, you mentioned, like, you were an alien, right? You were not a U.S. citizen at that time.

JU: No. (Chuckles)

MK: So how did that affect you, you know?

JU: (Chuckles) I didn't think much of it those days. In fact, nobody knew that I was an alien. I was kind of good in English already by that time. (Laughs) Nobody suspected I was an alien.

MK: And then, when you got to Kaua'i, where did you stay?

JU: I stayed in Nāwiliwili where my sister-in-law and my mom was. My sister-in-law was standing—she's scared because, you know, soldiers—you know, they're curious people and they want to know what the temple is about like that. So they would come up all the time, and they're asking their questions, but she doesn't speak English now—my sister-in-law. So she gets so nervous, and she gets scared. So she's telling me, "Come home, come home."

But I said, "I just cannot go home," you know. So she was happy when I came home. At least I can talk to the soldiers, yeah?

MK: And how about the Shinto shrine itself? Was it . . .

JU: Oh, it was still there. It was still there, yeah. But I heard the Lāwa'i one, the soldiers occupied the temple. So they said it's not livable even if you go back in after the war.

MK: And the house too?

JU: Yeah.

MK: Oh, so your house—your family house in Lāwai'i . . .

JU: Yeah.

MK: . . . occupied by the soldiers?

JU: Yeah, in the temple too, they said. (Laughs)

MK: So your mom . . .

JU: We lost everything, you know. We lost everything. Of course, we didn't have much, but I pitied those from the Mainland. They lost a lot. You know, the farming and everything—store or whatever they had—they lost big. But us, we didn't have much, so it's not too bad, you know.

MK: So---but your mom still lost some items . . .

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: . . . at her household in Lāwa'i?

JU: Mm-hmm, yeah.

MK: And then, in Nāwiliwili, at least until the time you went untouched.

JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah.

MK: And when you went to Nāwiliwili, if soldiers came up, what would they ask you?

JU: Oh, they're asking about the temple, you know. What's this for? And this, this, this, and that. And what is it, Shinto religion? All kind of. . . . They (are) curious.

MK: How did they treat you?

- JU: They're okay. The soldiers were okay.
- MK: And by that time, six—this is about six months later, yeah, you were saying?
- JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: What did you know about your father and brother?
- JU: No, no, we didn't know anything. We didn't know where they went. We don't know what happened to them. No word.
- MK: And how did, you know, your family friends or people who knew you folks—how did they react to the situation?
- JU: They were nice to us. They were nice to us. I guess they pitied us because, you know, we don't have, you know, a husband—our fathers and her husband not there. So they kind of pitied us. So they brought for us food and things like that. They were nice, the neighbors. They were very nice.
- MK: And at that time, did your sister-in-law have children?
- JU: Yeah, she had two.
- MK: Two children.
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: Okay. And what happened to your schooling then?
- JU: It stopped over there. No schooling. (Laughs)
- MK: Just . . .
- JU: Yeah, nothing.
- MK: So on Kaua'i, you . . .
- JU: No, I didn't go to school.
- MK: No schooling. And so, all this time, what were your feelings like?
- JU: I just was worried for my father and my brother, you know. Thinking what happened to them, you know? I really wanted to know what happened to them. They still—we didn't know what. . . .
- MK: Were there any offices or people you could go to?
- JU: No, but the government gave us food—you know, ration food or I don't know what—but told us to come and pick up some food. They were nice. It was not so bad.
- MK: And then, I know that, you know, you folks were eventually sent to Jerome, yeah?
- JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: How was—I don't know how to word this—was it a decision you folks made or choice, no choice?

- JU: No choice. We just followed instructions. They tell us, “Go,” and then we just listened. We don’t know where we were going, but you know—but there were lots of families together, so—you know, with us.
- MK: And then, what preparations—what did you folks do?
- JU: Well, we had only (three days)—they told us, “Three days, get ready to leave.” You know, they gave us only three days notice and only one suitcase to a person. We cannot bring, you know, a lot of things. Just maybe what you want to bring—belongings. Necessity kind of stuff. So we couldn’t bring much. Not much clothes. We didn’t have no winter clothes. And we got there, it was January and so cold and freezing, and we didn’t have no winter clothes. (Laughs) We had—well, they gave us army blanket, so we cover ourselves with that army blanket to keep us warm. And they had pot-bellied stove. You see, the Mainland people went there before us, so they kind of prepared for us. So they helped us move into our, you know, barracks. We had many people—Manzanar people. They said they’re from Manzanar.
- MK: So they helped you folks move into your barracks?
- JU: Yeah, yeah.
- MK: How about with clothing? You folks . . .
- JU: No, and that’s (what) we have to ask my brother in Honolulu to send us some clothes.
- MK: Oh. How long would it take to get stuff from Honolulu?
- JU: (Chuckles) Maybe one month, I don’t know. Maybe longer. We had one—like a canteen—one small store over there. I think the government ran that, I think. They had some things. But we had no money. (Laughs) We had no time to (get money out)—even the money was frozen, freeze. We cannot take out any money from the bank. So, we didn’t have much money. So we cannot buy much, you know, clothes. We had just little bit money with us. But we bought whatever we needed. Overcoat, for one thing. Some underwears—warm.
- MK: And like, you know, some—I’ve heard some families, you know, maybe they went with the father, yeah. Or there was a brother—menfolk in their family. Your case, it’s all women. Just you, your mother, sister-in-law, and two children. How did you folks . . .
- JU: A lot of families were like that.
- MK: . . . manage?
- JU: There were only few people with—that the husbands joined them. But us, we just—only on our own. But not too bad because there’s a lot of people from all over the island, were there with us together, yeah, the same boat.
- MK: Did you folks know some of the people that went?
- JU: Yeah, I used to know from Kaua’i, some of my friends, like the Kawamuras and Tashiros and—only a few. But the rest were from other islands. Big Island, Maui, O’ahu too, but I didn’t know too many. But just a few I knew. They were in the same, you know, situation.
- MK: So did your mom have like a *sodan* person? Somebody she could go to?
- JU: No. (Chuckles)
- MK: No?

- JU: Nobody knew anything. (Laughs) Nobody knew anything—where we're going. We thought—as soon as we go there, we going to meet our fathers or husbands, but no. A year and a half later, they joined us.
- MK: And you know, when you left the islands, you could only take one suitcase, yeah?
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: So what kinds of things did you folks have to leave behind?
- JU: Mostly everything, you know. Only a few items, we could bring clothes, you know. Mostly clothes that we brought. Everything was left behind.
- MK: And you know, you mentioned there were children that went with you, yeah? How old were they?
- JU: Oh, I think the younger one was maybe only—I think five and three, I think. (Chuckles)
- MK: And you were about, what, sixteen, seventeen?
- JU: No. Fifteen.
- MK: Fifteen.
- JU: Fifteen, sixteen. I don't know. Fifteen, I think.
- MK: And this trip, you know, you going from Kaua'i. Then you went to Honolulu. In Honolulu, where did you folks stay?
- JU: The immigration station. We stayed there Christmas day and you know, I think 24, 25. About three days, we were in the immigration station. We spent Christmas in the immigration station but nothing—there's no Christmas for us, of course. I think 27th, I think, we left to the Mainland.
- MK: What were conditions like at the immigration station?
- JU: You know, small children crying, and there was only cot. You know, cot, yeah. No beds or anything. And so, like—for me, it wasn't too bad, but you know, those people with small children, I think they had hard time. Some mothers with small children, they have to—I know they have to make milk and stuff like that, you know. They had to use Carnation milk and, you know, like—I think the babies were not used to that kind of milk, maybe, but. . . .
- MK: And then, from Honolulu to California, on the ship . . .
- JU: It wasn't too bad. It was *Lurline*. *Lurline*, I think, was used for transportation ship at that time. That was the last trip for *Lurline*. That wasn't so bad, but still, that cot—you know, no more bed, yeah? So some of us bunk on the top and some in below.
- MK: Were you folks able to stay together all the time?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, we stayed together. Everybody was sick, though, for the first two or three days. (Laughs) All so sick, yeah?
- MK: Oh, no. Mom, sister, and you?
- JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- MK: And . . .

JU: But everybody in the same situation, so we help each other—encourage ourself and each other. (Chuckles)

MK: You know, I was wondering, your mother, your sister-in-law—they both didn't speak English?

JU: No, no. They didn't speak English.

MK: Small children with them and you, how did they seem? How were they taking it?

JU: I don't know, but you know, they said, "*Shikata ga nai*," yeah? (Chuckles) You know, war, yeah? So they got to expect something like that, I guess. They didn't talk so much. They just followed instructions.

WN: I was wondering, you know, with you being, you know, sixteen. You're pretty much a teenager. And then, you know, you spoke English. You must've been a big help to your mother.

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. (Chuckles) They depended on me for everything.

WN: Like what?

JU: Anything. If they want to know, I have to, you know, tell them what's happening. Of course, we didn't know much of what was happening, but yeah. I'm the only one they depend on. (Chuckles)

WN: Were you outgoing enough to, you know, ask people about certain things in English?

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But nobody knew nothing.

(Laughter)

No news.

WN: What about, like, the officials on the boat? You know, did you folks have to ask them any questions?

JU: I don't even remember if had officials. (Laughs)

WN: Really, you don't remember soldiers or . . .

JU: No, no soldiers. I don't see no soldiers.

WN: *Hakujin*? Were there *hakujin*?

JU: No. All, you know, those from Hawai'i you know those. . . .

MK: Oh. And then . . .

JU: Yeah, but only for our purpose—to send us to the Mainland to the camps. So there's no outsiders.

MK: And then, if you had to ask, like, where do we go for food? Or where do we go to do this or that?

JU: Yeah, I have to find out.

MK: You have to find out? You have to find out.

JU: Yeah, and some of them too sick to go to, you know, mess hall. So we have to carry food back for our families. All the young ones (needed to help).

WN: You know, you might've been—you know, because you were born in Japan and most of the people your age were, you know, from Hawai'i. You were probably the best person that knew English and Japanese, yeah?

JU: Yeah, my friends knew English but didn't speak too much Japanese.

MK: So I wonder—we were wondering if, maybe, other Japanese families would say, "Oh, let's go ask Chieko. Go ask Chieko-san and maybe Chieko-san can go talk to the other—" you know, to the officials or whomever—somebody to ask a question.

JU: No, nobody said that.

MK: No? (Laughs)

WN: You know, once you took the train from West Coast to Arkansas, was that different in terms of English-speaking people there or anything like that?

JU: They were only for us now—that train. Only for, you know, our purpose. So all black out the window. We cannot see outside, and they cannot see us. I think some say five days, but to me, it was only four nights and three days. But some say five days. I don't know.

(Laughter)

I don't remember too much.

WN: Boy, you have a good memory.

MK: How was that? That's four days—five days—that's still a long time.

JU: A long time we don't change clothes because we don't take a bath, yeah? I think we was smelling bad, I think. (Laughs) And then, we made one stop in New Mexico, I remember. And then, they told us we can—they open the window for us and they had—come Indian people. They were selling jewelry, yeah. But we have no money. (Laughs) They want me to buy but no money.

MK: And that's the only time you saw outside?

JU: That's the only time we saw outside. Somebody said, "I think we went through five states or something," they were saying. (Chuckles) I don't know.

MK: And then, what were like—you folks sitting all the time?

JU: Yeah, we're sitting. (Laughs)

MK: So sleeping?

JU: Yeah, we sit down and go to sleep like that.

WN: Oh, there weren't any beds for you folks?

JU: No, no, no.

WN: Wow.

JU: I think, my mom, she wasn't feeling too well, so I think they had bed or something that she can stay—kind of lie down. There was old people and sick people, I think. But the young ones—no choice.

- MK: How did you folks manage with the children? I mean, children are children, yeah?
- JU: Yeah, they had hard time. (Chuckles) They want to cry but (chuckles) they said tears don't come out or something. That's what the young mothers were saying.
- MK: And then, guards? Any guards on the train?
- JU: No, no guards. Of course when we landed in Jerome [Relocation Center in Arkansas], all barbed wire fence and guards—guardhouse. They were there.
- MK: You know, is it okay if we stop here?
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: Because 11:30. And we come back to talk about Jerome and Tule Lake [Relocation Center in California]. So we'll come back one more time, okay?
- JU: That's all right.
- MK: Thank you.
- WN: Okay, thank you.
- END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 57-10-2-12

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Janet Tahara Uehara

Honolulu, O‘ahu

September 7, 2012

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Janet Tahara Uehara.

WN: Janet, can I have you come closer?

JU: Okay, sure.

WN: Okay.

MK: Are you comfortable?

JU: Yeah.

MK: Okay, with your knee?

JU: It's okay. (Chuckles)

MK: Okay. So this is an interview with Janet Chieko Tahara Uehara. And it's session number two on September 7, 2012. And the interview is being held in Honolulu, O‘ahu with Warren Nishimoto and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto. So thank you for meeting with us again. (Chuckles)

JU: It's a pleasure if I can help. If I can be of help, yeah, any kind of help. I'm glad to do it. (Chuckles)

MK: Well, thank you. And as I said before, we're going to back up a little bit. First of all, I wanted to know the name of your half-brother who was at Nāwiliwili.

JU: Yeah, his name was Shigeo Fujino.

MK: Okay. And you know, you were saying that your father was a Shinto priest.

JU: Mm-hmm [yes].

MK: Did he teach Japanese language?

JU: In Japan, he did. But in Hawai‘i, he did not.

MK: He did not. Did he teach any other things on Kaua‘i like martial arts or anything?

JU: No, no.

MK: Nothing?

- JU: No. (Chuckles)
- MK: Okay. And I was wondering if your father used to sort of be like a contact person for the consulate?
- JU: Yes, yes, yes. You know, a lot of people are—they didn't know much about how to get a hold of writing to the Japanese consulate, and so he used to go and be the between person, yeah?
- MK: Mm-hmm [yes].
- JU: When there's a birth or, you know, like marriages like that.
- MK: So he would help be the communication person?
- JU: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: Oh. And then, in those days, if Japanese ships happened to visit, was your father one of those who went to greet?
- JU: No, I didn't see any ship come to (Kaua'i). (Laughs)
- MK: Okay, okay. And I know you mentioned that your father was sent to the Mainland, yeah, during the war.
- JU: Mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: Would you know which camps he was sent to?
- JU: I know he told me several camps, but the one I know is Louisiana. Camp Livingston. Because they had told us that we were allowed to visit him, you know. They let us go over there, so I remember I went to see him.
- MK: Now, continuing where we left off, you know, when you first got to Jerome, what did you think?
- JU: (Chuckles) It was January, you know. It was so very cold. And we did not prepare for cold weather. We didn't have no jackets, nothing. So, the Red Cross was nice enough to give us jacket and mitten, you know, and scarf, I think. They gave us something like that. The rooms were barren. Only cot. Not really bed, only cot. Like army kind of cot. And one pot-bellied stove. You had to burn wood to keep yourself warm. But the---I was told that when the first Mainland people from California arrived, the buildings were really (not well done), the wind was coming in because they made the homes in a hurry that the wood used wasn't dry enough. So you know, as it gets dry, they shrink and all the, you know, cracks behind there. So it was cold, so I heard they had to get the black tar paper, and they have to wrap around the building. So when we went, it was done already for us, so it wasn't that cold. But the Mainland people that were there first—they welcomed us. That was nice. They helped us with our luggage and stuff like that. (Chuckles)
- MK: Were there---when you say they welcomed you folks and helped you folks with your luggage, how were they helpful to you folks? How did they help you folks?
- JU: I mean, see, they were first from Manzanar. The Mainland people from California were there first. So they came to help us get settled and helped us with our luggage and things like that. So it was nice. It was nice of them to do that. (Laughs) So we really appreciated them.
- MK: And then, when you look back, what do you remember about how your mother reacted to the situation?

- JU: Yeah, well, she said, "*Shikata ga nai*." You know how they say. My father was taken, so you know, it's wartime. She said, "*Shikata ga nai*." (Chuckles) It's sad for her to, you know, go, but you cannot help it. She said we have to listen, yeah?
- MK: And then, at that time, when you came, you came with your sister-in-law . . .
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: . . . and one or two children?
- JU: Two children.
- MK: Two children. What do you remember about how your sister-in-law reacted as, you know, mother of children?
- JU: Yeah, you know, we're not certain or anything. We don't know where the husbands are or our fathers are. So we don't know if we're going to see them soon or—really, you know, we're not sure. So she was kind of worried and upset. It kind of lonely feeling, that you lose your—you know, the person—the head of the family not there. (Chuckles)
- MK: And then, for you, how did you feel?
- JU: Well, you know, I was young, yeah. (Chuckles) So I just went along. I didn't feel too bad. I mean, there were a lot of other people besides us, so you know.
- WN: You said that the uncertainty was hard.
- JU: Yeah, yeah.
- WN: Was it hard for you?
- JU: Yes. We were worried about our—you know, my brother and my father. You know, you want to know how they're doing. That's the only thing. We used to worry about them, you know.
- MK: And by that time, when you went to Jerome, what had you heard or known about your father's or brother's situation?
- JU: Well, we thought maybe they're going to meet us there right away, yeah? We were hopeful that we might see them. But no word and we didn't know where they were. So that was hard again.
- MK: And then, when you first went to Jerome, what block were you folks placed?
- JU: Hawai'i people were 38, 39, 40. I was in 38. Block 38.
- MK: Block 38. And you know, from the time you left Kaua'i, Honolulu, California, going on the train to Arkansas—by the time you reached Jerome, how well did you know the other Hawai'i people?
- JU: Oh, all those that went on the train the same place where we rode the train, I knew them pretty well. But the other people, we didn't know yet.
- MK: Would you remember anything about the people when you think about them? The Hawai'i people that you were together with?
- JU: Yeah, well, we were young, but the ladies, I think, they had hard time with children. You know, babies would cry. I think they really had hard time.

- MK: And then, you know, the other day, when we talked with you, we found out you came from Japan. You were educated in Japan—elementary school. So you understood Japanese, yeah?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- MK: And then, you went English school on Kaua‘i. So we were wondering, you know, to what extent did the *issei* maybe ask you for some help in communicating? Because you could do both sides.
- JU: You mean when we were going?
- MK: Mm-hmm [yes], when you were going and in Jerome.
- JU: I don’t know. No, they didn’t ask me much questions. They were just silent. (Chuckles)
- MK: On the trip?
- JU: Yeah. I didn’t do anything too much of those things. (Chuckles)
- MK: Oh, okay, okay.
- JU: Anyway, those mothers were on another part of the train. All the young ones all were in another part, so you know, we just got along with the young ones. So we didn’t bother too much all the old people. (Chuckles)
- MK: Oh, I see. And then, when you folks, you know, got settled in at Jerome, . . .
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: . . . what was life like in camp, especially without the menfolk? You know, you didn’t have any men in your situation.
- JU: Yeah. Well, we had some *kibei* boys over there. So they used to get the firewood for us and things like that. So it wasn’t too bad. But well, I don’t know what to say, but (laughs) since I was young, it didn’t bother me too much, you know. (Laughs) Maybe if I was older, I would be more worried. But since I was young, I just went along.
- MK: And then, so like your everyday life at Jerome, try describe it for us. What would you do? What kinds of things?
- JU: Well, we had mess hall. So breakfast and lunch and dinner, we had to go to the mess hall. We had shower stall, too. Just like the army, it was built exactly like the army. That’s why the GIs used to tell us, it’s built just like a—you know, barracks—soldiers’ barracks. So, washing, too, everything over there. We had volunteers to work in the mess hall, so I remember, my brother had volunteered to cook, yeah. They didn’t know how to cook, but they had to learn. (Laughs) They were with Mr. Toguchi. I think he had a restaurant before he went to camp, so it was a help for them. I think he taught them how to cook.
- MK: So who went to help in the mess hall? Your . . .
- JU: After my brother joined us—but before, while just young people, old people, whoever wanted to help, we helped in the mess hall.
- MK: Uh-huh, uh-huh [yes].
- JU: But after my brother came back to us, about after one year, yeah? Or a year and a half, I think. But altogether, we stayed away about two-and-a-half years from them because before we went, they were gone for one year, yeah? After a year and a half more, then they joined us. Two-and-a-half years later. Then, I remember, my brother was working

the mess hall. The ladies want to work in the mess hall too, they can because they got paid sixteen dollars, I think, a month.

MK: How about your mother and your sister-in-law—what did they do?

JU: No, they didn't do anything. (Chuckles) My sister-in-law had two children, so she had to (take care of them). And my mom was already old, so she did not help.

MK: And then, what were you doing every day?

JU: Well, we went to school. But it was so cold that we didn't want to go to school, you know. So all the Hawai'i kids would get around the, you know, the stove, and then, we just chatting and visiting with each other. And then, they told us, how come the Hawai'i kids didn't want to go to school?

(Laughter)

I said, "No, too cold. We cannot go to school."

But you know, we decided, "Oh, we better go school." (Laughs) So we decided to go but before that, I think, we didn't go for a long time. (Laughs)

WN: Okay, did they have people to check on you folks to make sure you went to school or anything like that?

JU: No. It was on your own. They said volunteers—they had volunteer teachers from outside come. You know, *haole* teachers. They came and taught us.

MK: And what grades did you go to while in Jerome?

JU: Well, sophomore, junior, and senior because I jumped, yeah. You know, my principal used to make me jump, jump. If I learned a little bit English, I used to go higher, yeah? So I was almost caught up with other same-age students.

MK: So at Jerome, you had sophomore year, . . .

JU: Yeah. Junior . . .

MK: . . . junior year, . . .

JU: Yeah. Senior.

MK: . . . and senior year. Did you finish, over there, senior year?

JU: Well, they gave me diploma, but I was supposed to graduate in winter class, but we didn't stay until that long. So they gave me a diploma.

(Laughter)

So I didn't need to have a graduation ceremony.

MK: No ceremony then?

JU: There was. Some of them had though. But those that graduated earlier, yeah, they had graduation like that, but I didn't have.

MK: Oh, and then, when you compare you went school in Hawai'i and then you went school in camp. When you think about both sides. . . .

JU: Well, Hawai'i, we really learned something. But you know, in the camp, we can pick whatever we want. You know, like picking art and things like that, you know—music—like that. So we didn't learn much at camp. (Laughs)

MK: What kind of courses did you choose?

JU: (Chuckles) Well, we had history, and those things. I don't know what I took already. (Laughs) I don't remember. I took art. (Laughs) Music. I remember those. And important kind, I think I didn't even take.

(Laughter)

MK: You like your electives. The art, the music. (MK and JU laugh.) You know, you mentioned that you had these *haole* teachers.

JU: Yeah.

MK: What was it like?

JU: They were real nice to us. And then, one of the teachers said that—social studies or something, she was teaching us—and she said that her friends told her, "Oh, I didn't know you speak Japanese." They thought all the, you know, the people in the—over there—all spoke only Japanese. (Laughter) They didn't know (about) niseis like that.

WN: They didn't know you spoke English?

JU: Yeah.

MK: And you know, you spoke about the teachers—you know, since you folks are in a camp, how much contact did you have with, like, the guards or the administrators?

JU: Not much.

MK: Not much?

JU: No.

MK: And then, when you would see guards, . . .

JU: Mm-hmm [yes]. But it's—they're up in a tower, like, you know. So we really cannot see them. You know somebody's up there watching, yeah, and all barbed wire fence. So I don't know if this is true or what, but I heard that this man and the son were playing ball, and then the ball went underneath the fence and went the other side. And then, the guard had shot the father or something like that. I heard but I don't know if that's true, you know. (Chuckles) Because he's not supposed to go over the fence but they did—the father went over the fence to get the ball or something.

MK: You know, at that time, when you have these guards and you have barbed wire, what did you feel or think about it?

JU: Like we're in the jail. (Laughs) We don't have any freedom, yeah.

MK: And when you folks were in Jerome, were there times that you folks could go outside of the camp?

JU: No. At first, we were not allowed. But I heard somebody said that he got pass or something, and he went to the neighbor's place and bought chicken or something to feed, you know, the soldiers—the 442nd [RCT] boys used to come. Make them *hekka*, chicken *hekka* or something. Used to buy the chicken for fifty cents. I heard something like that but our place, no. Our camp, nobody did that. I heard some people did that though. So

- I'm amazed that they were allowed to go out, I guess. But we didn't know we could go, yeah.
- MK: And then, like right now, you mentioned, like, the 442 men. They used to come visit.
- JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: What do you remember about the 442 guys coming to visit?
- JU: I think we welcomed them because they—we know they're fighting for, you know, the country. And so, they said people in Hawai'i told us that after the GIs volunteered for going to the army, then the situation over here became better. They treat the Japanese a little better. That's what they told us, so we welcomed them—the boys—and we had USO [United Service Organizations]. (Chuckles)
- MK: Did you participate in the USO?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, we did.
- MK: What did you folks do?
- JU: Just dance. And then, we baked for them cookies and things like that. Some people baked cookies and things like that. You know, refreshments for them. We had some kind of juice. (Laughs) We had dancing. But for the Hawai'i boys, that was really, you know, just like—it's close to home. So they used to really enjoy that. I think, some mess hall people made *musubi* and stuff like that for them to take home to the Camp Shelby.
- MK: You know, those 442 guys that came, did you know any of them from Kaua'i?
- JU: No. (Chuckles) Some of them had friends come over, you know.
- MK: And then, the USO—like you folks would have dances. You folks would bake cookies. What else did you folks do?
- JU: Just talk stories, you know. The old days in Hawai'i or something like that.
- MK: And then, your mom and—if your dad, he was already there—what did they think about you helping with the USO?
- JU: They didn't mind, I guess. But they didn't say much, yeah. But it's okay. (Laughs)
- MK: And you know, I was wondering if—you're already a high school girl, right? Teenager. What did you folks do for socializing in camp?
- JU: Not much. But they had games going on. They had everything—baseball, volleyball, or whatever. We used to go to those games just to watch the people—the young boys play.
- MK: And how about clubs or . . .
- JU: No, we didn't have anything like that.
- MK: Nothing?
- JU: No, no.
- MK: And then, some people, they talk about going into like a forest-like area.
- JU: Yeah, yeah.

MK: How about you?

JU: No. We went to pick some firewood, yeah. We used to go in the mountains. But some people, I think they said they had—they picked those mushrooms. But maybe we didn't pick any of those, but we just used to go and pick firewood. But most of the firewood was done by the young *kibei* boys, but sometimes we used to help and go and pick wood, yeah.

MK: You know, these young *kibei* boys, were they with their families, too?

JU: No. All by themselves. Young men. Maybe our camp, we had about eight boys—*kibei* boys. But I guess the (blocks) 39 and 40 had some boys too.

MK: And they were from Hawai'i?

JU: Yeah. They used to get mad because they are citizens, yeah, and they got taken away. So they were kind of angry.

WN: Did they seem more Japanese to you folks?

JU: Yeah. I mean, they hardly spoke English—mostly Japanese, they spoke—those boys.

WN: And did they do more Japanese-type things?

JU: Yeah.

WN: Like what?

JU: They had *shibai* like that over there. They had *Bon* dance too, you know. So in that (sense), I think, we were luckier than those in Hawai'i. I think they couldn't do anything—those Hawai'i people. But they allowed us to do those things—the *shibai*. And you know, amazing, those menfolks they can sew clothes too. I don't know how they got the material, but they sew, you know, kimono. And they even sewed *hakama*, you know. (Laughs)

WN: Oh yeah?

JU: They're clever people. And so, they made *shibai* for us. (Laughs)

MK: Would you remember what kind of *shibai*? What kind of stories?

JU: No.

MK: (Laughs) Oh, but they put on the *shibai*?

JU: Yeah.

MK: With their own costumes that they made?

JU: Yeah, yeah. Amazing. (Chuckles)

MK: And where would they . . .

JU: I thought they were clever people—Japanese people.

MK: Where would they perform?

JU: We had mess halls—like that, you know. Make a stage. Three camps would come together.

- MK: And then, you mentioned *Bon* dance. This was at Jerome?
- JU: Yeah, but I didn't go. I don't know what—I think it was not from my own camp, I think. It was from the Mainland—we called them *kotonks*, yeah. (Laughs)
- MK: The *kotonks*?
- JU: I think they had the *Bon* dance, I think. I heard---we heard the music though. (Chuckles)
- WN: When you were at camp—you know, and those things like *Bon* dance—did you feel that that you had to act more American?
- JU: No. (Chuckles)
- MK: And then, like, with *Bon* dances, they're basically Buddhist, yeah?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- MK: So in camp, were there Buddhist priests?
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: And were they providing religious services?
- JU: Yeah. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes]. Like Sunday school, you know. And they were teaching . . .
- MK: Did you go?
- JU: I went. I was with my friends. (Laughs) Any place. You know, if they go, I would follow them and go. They had services too.
- MK: And then, how about your father, you know, and your brother—both Shinto priests. Did they do any of the usual Shinto things in camp?
- JU: No, no, they didn't do anything. No. (Laughs) But usually, had a lot of Buddhist priests over there. So they could do things together, yeah. But Shinto priests, not too many.
- MK: Not too many. Like would you remember other Shinto priests that were, like, in your blocks?
- JU: Yeah, I used to know one. Tenrikyo priest. That's about it. (Chuckles)
- MK: And you know, you were saying that after about a year and a half, you father and brother came, yeah? How was that—when they joined you folks?
- JU: (Chuckles) A really happy occasion for us, you know. We felt kind of strong after we came. Like we have a family now. But of course, we knew we were going to go back to Japan, I think. My father wanted to go back to Japan. But then, after the war ended—so he said, "America is good country." You know, because they gave us choices, yeah? We either go back to Japan or we can come back to Hawai'i, see. Any other country, you're just deported to, you know, Japan. So they gave us choice. So he's very thankful for America. (Laughs)
- MK: And then . . .
- JU: And he wanted to go back to Japan, but he said—after they lost the war, he said he had experience like that. You know, Japan lost a war before. He said, "There's no food," when they lose the war like that. He said, "You know, the mountain by our place," he said, "came all barren, bald. They even dig the roots and they ate. There's nothing to eat."

So he said, "It's a burden for Japan if we go back." He said, "It's better not to go back." And so, we didn't go back.

MK: When your father and brother first came back to Jerome, I was wondering, what did they do, you know?

JU: Well, my brother worked in the cafeteria. Mess hall. But my father didn't do anything. (Chuckles)

MK: And what do you remember about how they were reacting to the situation?

JU: They were kind of sad, you know, things like that happened to them, you know. They didn't do anything wrong and, you know, they lock you up like this. They said it's not fair. (Chuckles) They feel kind of bad about that, yeah.

WN: I was wondering, you know, when the 442 boys came, was it like a formal thing? Or did they just come and . . .

JU: Yeah.

WN: And what did they do though? Did they just kind of mingle?

JU: Yeah, yeah. If they had friends, they would visit with them and go to the—what do you call?—where they live. Those people that live—barracks?

(Telephone rings.)

MK: We can pause.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay.

MK: Yeah, we were just talking about—Warren asked a question, yeah?

WN: About the 442nd. Yeah, let's see. So there was nothing formal.

JU: No.

WN: And you were visiting family and friends. Did they come in their uniform?

JU: Yeah, they did. (Laughs)

WN: And then, did it—did you know ahead of time that they were coming?

JU: Yeah. We would announce that, you know, the USO is open, you know. I think they used to contact somehow to let the boys know that they can come any time. So they just came over the weekend.

WN: Oh, I see. So just every weekend, some would come.

JU: Yeah, yeah. Some would come.

WN: I see.

JU: They had another camp called Rohwer, yeah. They had some Hawai'i people there too, but I think we had more Hawai'i people in Jerome, so they rather come to our place. That's what they told us. (Laughs)

- WN: Oh, okay. So like the 442, there were some . . .
- JU: Went to Rohwer.
- WN: . . . Mainland guys too that came along with the Hawai'i boys or did you see just the Hawai'i boys?
- JU: No, only Hawai'i boys came. It was interesting.
- WN: And is it—sorry. (JU laughs.) Is it something you looked forward to?
- JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, I was—dancing was fun for us. (Laughs) All those things. I used to like to dance.
- WN: Oh.
- MK: So when you folks had dances, was it like music that was performed live by a band?
- JU: No.
- MK: Records?
- JU: Records.
- MK: Records. Oh. It must've been kind of good fun, yeah?
- JU: Yeah. (Laughs)
- WN: So like ballroom dance, foxtrot, and like what else? Swing?
- JU: Yeah. We did only easy kind dance, you know. (Chuckles) We didn't know those steps then.
- (Laughter)
- Jitterbug and stuff. (Laughs)
- WN: Wow.
- MK: You know, I was . . .
- JU: Yeah, it was fun. We used to look forward to—and they used to look forward to coming down because lot of the mess hall people would feed them *musubi* like that. They really miss that. You know, *tsukemono* and stuff like that. (Laughs) They really miss that, you know. So that was a treat for them.
- MK: So even for you folks in the mess halls, what kinds of food did you folks get usually?
- JU: The GIs told us that we eating exactly the same like the army team soldiers. That's what they were feeding us. And had a lot of lamb, like that, you know. But they didn't want to eat the lamb.
- WN: Oh, lamb.
- JU: Nobody wanted to eat that. (Laughs) The Japanese especially. They don't know how to eat that, I think. So they cook it, but the mess hall was empty. (Laughs) Then we have to eat *saimin* or something. (Chuckles)

- WN: So the Japanese—the local foods like *saimin* and *musubi*—how often did you folks eat that?
- JU: No, we don't eat. Only for the soldiers, they used to make (for them).
- WN: Oh, really?
- JU: We don't get that. We only get American food. Those people, I think they—I don't know how they—or when they give us rice, I think, they used to save it for the GIs to entertain them.
- MK: And how would you folks get the *tsukemono*?
- JU: They used to—I guess, when the cabbage like that come or, you know, vegetables come, I guess, they keep that, and they make *tsukemono*, I think like that. The mess hall people.
- MK: Oh. And then, like you mentioned, you folks had dances. How about like picnics or anything else you folks did with them?
- JU: No, we didn't have no picnics.
- MK: Mostly—so dances, yeah?
- JU: Yeah, that's all.
- MK: And then, earlier, you mentioned like the *kibei* young men, yeah?
- JU: Mm-hmm [yes].
- MK: How did the *kibei* young men react to these 442 guys coming to camp?
- JU: They didn't mind. They don't know what's going to happen. You know, we don't know what's going to happen to us, yeah. So you know, we're not—what you call?—(chuckles) picky, you know. Just do whatever other people are doing. Just go along.
- WN: And did you folks sort of look up to these 442 boys?
- JU: Yeah. (Laughs) They're fighting for, you know, us like.
- WN: Was this—was there ever a feeling that, oh, this might be the last time we're going to see some of these boys?
- JU: Yeah, yeah. It's kind of sad, too, yeah? (Chuckles)
- MK: You know, and your father and your brother, they're Shintoists, yeah, from Japan. Where did they stand, you know, in this Japan-U.S. war?
- JU: (Chuckles) You mean like . . .
- MK: More for Japan or more for U.S.?
- JU: They all for Japan, yeah, because (laughs) you know. So I guess they want Japan to win, I guess. (Chuckles) Because I remember when (Japan) lost the war—I saw the menfolks—our fathers—they're all crying. They're crying, crying, crying. They couldn't stop crying. It was sad.
- MK: And then, when—you know, you mentioned that, like, your brother at Tule Lake would put on the *hachimaki* and be outside doing *wasshoi wasshoi*.

JU: Yeah.

MK: In Jerome, was he active in the same way?

JU: No, no.

MK: No?

JU: Only when—this was the place only those that want to go to Japan. That's the camp over there.

MK: And you know, maybe you can explain to us again how come the family moved to Tule Lake from Jerome.

JU: Those that wanted to go back to Japan moved to Tule Lake. There were lots, you know, from the Mainland people too. There were lots over there. Big camp. They all wanted to go back to Japan.

MK: And you know, how come your family wanted to go back to Japan?

JU: I guess we were not treated right in America, so I guess they wanted to go back to Japan, I guess. I think they were quite sure they was going to win the war. (Laughs)

WN: And how did you feel when your father said we want to go back to Japan?

JU: Well, I went along with whatever he said. I didn't care. (Laughs) That was okay with me.

MK: How about your mom?

JU: Yeah, she's okay too with that. It was okay.

WN: So you're very accommodating. (JU chuckles.) You know, to say that, you know, it doesn't matter.

JU: Yeah.

WN: That's very . . .

MK: Well you were agreeable—you were going to go with your family.

JU: Whatever my father wanted to do, we would go along, you know.

MK: And then, at that time, when you were told, oh, your family is going to go to Tule Lake, what conversations did you have with your friends? You know, your girlfriends in camp.

JU: Oh, you mean Jerome?

MK: Yeah, at Jerome. You know, before you went.

JU: We didn't say much about those things. Some of them were allowed to move out from (Jerome)—they went to Chicago. The Takahatas went to Chicago like them. Slowly, they allowed us to go—you know, move to some states. See, like the Mainland people, they lost everything, you know. So you know, the farming and the business and everything. But, like, Hawai'i people, not too bad, you know. We didn't have much, yeah. We didn't have a home, you know, that belonged to the church, you know, like that. It wasn't too bad. But I think the Mainland people really felt that they lost everything. So there was anger over there, yeah. So they want to go to Japan, I guess. They had a lot of people from California. They all wanted to go back to Japan.

MK: You know, you mentioned, you know, people started leaving the camps. Some went, like, Chicago. Some, like your family, making a decision that they eventually want to go back to Japan. So as people are leaving the camp—you know, like Takahatas are leaving, different families are leaving—how did you feel?

JU: (Chuckles) Yeah, we became, you know, really good friends with them, and they're leaving. We kind of felt bad, but we felt happy for them. If that's what they want, you know, they should do it. We want to go Japan, so we would go Japan, you know.

MK: And when, you know, other people heard, "Oh, you know, the Taharas. They're going to go Japan." What did, you know, friends or people who knew you folks tell you folks?

JU: Well, that's up to (you)—we didn't care. Up to us—our family—because they want to do something, and we want to do something. That was okay with them, I guess. Just say, "Good luck." (Laughs)

MK: And then, how did you folks go to Tule Lake, by the way? The transportation. How did you folks go?

JU: With a train again.

MK: Train again?

JU: Yeah.

MK: And that time, was it all kind of—the shades are down and everything?

JU: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [yes].

MK: And when you folks went to Tule Lake, what were you able to take this time? What did you . . .

JU: Well, we didn't have much. We only had clothes and a few stuff. That's all we had because we couldn't buy anything in Jerome anyway. So in fact, we had maybe some things got lost or broken or whatever. So we didn't have much to take. Tule Lake was same like Jerome. The buildings were built same exactly like that.

MK: How about the conditions there? The cold or the heat or the . . .

JU: Yeah, it was cold too. Cold and hot. (JU and WN chuckle.)

MK: How hot did it get over there?

JU: (Laughs) I don't remember, but I know it was hot. But we saw one mountain—Shasta. They called it the Shasta.

WN: Mount Shasta.

JU: They say the old folks say, "Eh, look like Mount Fuji." (Laughs) They were looking at the mountain, and they felt good. They closer to Japan. (Laughs) It reminded them of Mount Fuji because it was nice. But they were ready to go back to Japan, I guess. Many of them did go back to Japan, but they had hardship. My brother folks was really sent over there, you know. They had no choice. They had to go. But then—but the other people had choice, but they went back to Japan anyway. They had a really hard time.

MK: You know, your brother—what did he do at Tule Lake?

JU: Just running around like a crazy man. (Chuckles) All of us get together and they have meeting all the time. See, they used to (run around the camp with *hachimaki* and say "*Banzai*" to the Emperor of Japan). The leaders used to get locked up in canteen or

something like that, they used to call themselves *katta-gumi*. But they picked the next leader you know, already picked already. So that person go and then the next person can be the leader. They do the same thing. That was really disloyal to America.

MK: And your brother was . . .

JU: One of them.

MK: One of the leaders.

JU: Yeah. Almost the ending he was. (Laughs)

MK: How about your father? Was he also involved . . .

JU: No.

MK: . . . in your brother's activities?

JU: No. No. That was only for the young people like *kibeis* and young boys.

MK: You were saying. . . What did you think of your brother doing all that?

JU: He's crazy.

(Laughter)

My brother say he's crazy. And my father said, "I know they're angry but you know that's real bad to act like that," he said. (Laughs)

MK: Because your brother was so outward expressing his stand, how did people react to your family?

JU: Those people in Tule Lake were mostly all for Japan so they didn't mind. That was okay. Only my father didn't like it. (Chuckles)

MK: I was wondering, was there any pressure on your father to become more outwardly expressive like your brother?

JU: No. No.

MK: And you were saying that Tule Lake was like Jerome?

JU: Yeah.

MK: Most things were about the same.

JU: Yeah.

MK: The barracks. Mess hall.

JU: Mess hall. Yeah. Same.

WN: I'm wondering, did they separate the pro-Japan folks from the regular people? Were you folks in a separate section?

JU: No. In Tule Lake we were all for going Japan. All those that want to go back Japan. We're all same.

WN: But, there were others at Tule Lake right?

JU: No. No Only those that want to go back Japan were there.

WN: The whole camp then?

JU: Whole camp was.

WN: Okay.

JU: Lots of people wanted to go back Japan.

WN: I see.

JU: Mostly from the Mainland people. California people.

MK: By that time you were *pau* with school. You were done with school.

JU: Yeah. So, in Tule Lake we had work to do. We had---I used to work in a department called clothing department. Just like a welfare I think. They used to give every family money for clothing I guess. A clothing allowance I think. So, we used to make checks like that over there. We had one office. I used to work over there. Another Hawai'i girl she passed away. Her name was Ellen Mayekawa. Her brother is still living but she passed away. She and I was the only Hawai'i girls working in there.

We have no cars, no transportation. By foot or they gave us bicycle. (JU and MK chuckle.) So I have to---from my barracks to where we had to work was kind of far so I have to practice outdoor ride bicycle yeah? My friend, she knew how, so she used to pack me on her bike every day going to work, but we fell down so many times. (Laughs) I think to myself I think I better learn how to ride bike myself. I did learn over there how to ride bike I remember. (JU and MK laugh.)

WN: I'm wondering, because Tule Lake was mostly pro-Japanese who wanted to go back, did you notice the security being more tight or anything like that?

JU: No. Same.

WN: Same.

JU: Oh yeah, they used to call it stockade where my brother, the leaders, were locked up. The leaders, stockade they used to call it. They were sent away someplace. I don't know where. The leaders only, yeah.

MK: Your brother too?

JU: Yeah, he was sent away too.

WN: So he never told you where he went. (JU and WN chuckle.) When did he pass away?

JU: Oh, maybe already ten years already. He passed away young. He had heart attack.

MK: This brother, he did go back to Japan?

JU: Yeah. The whole family. My sister-in-law. In Tule Lake they had another child. They had three children. In Jerome they had the third one. Many families had addition. (Laughs) So the three kids, they went back Japan and my father said it's not good to go back Japan because you're going to suffer. There's nothing to eat and Japan people not going to be happy that you came back. He had to go, so no choice. He was just sent back. But, my brother told us that he's not used to farming. We had farming then but somebody took over. He got that land back and he was trying to do farming but he said he couldn't do it. Too hard for him. So he had that job at the *yakuba* yeah.

MK: Government office.

JU: Yeah, in Japan. That's where he worked.

Many years after my two grand—I mean my nephews, two of them. One came back first, the older one. Because he's a citizen yeah. He was born in Hawai'i.

MK: They were (sansei). They were born in America yeah?

JU: Yeah. Like my brother and my sister-in-law's citizenship was taken away, but the young kids they left it alone I think. So he came back and then several years and he worked hard. He saved enough money to call his parents. So my sister-in-law and then the second brother came first. They stayed with us for maybe a couple of years and then my brother came after that. The youngest boy he was going to school for being a barber or something, so he didn't come for a while. But at the end, they all came.

MK: And then, in the postwar period after the war, did your brother ever continue being a Shinto priest?

JU: No.

MK: No. He never went back to that?

JU: He never went back to Kaua'i. We don't know what happened to the Nāwiliwili church but I know Lāwa'i one was damaged they said.

MK: So your father, your mother, and you—you folks originally had made the choice to go back to Japan yeah?

JU: Mm-hmm. [yes]

MK: But, again, why did your father—he changed his mind though.

JU: Because Japan lost the war. It's not nice to say but you know Japan lost the war. He said, "It's not a place to go back." He said, "You're just going to see hardship over there." And, "Japan will not welcome you," he said. He knows that, so it's not good to go back. So he said again America is a good country in a way because they let you do that. They give you choice. Any other country you're going to be deported because you're disloyal to the country. (Chuckles)

MK: So, the family then came back to Hawai'i?

JU: Yeah. Well, I wasn't so bad because my brother was the older brother—was living in Hawai'i. So, we came back to his place, but my friends—some of my friends—they didn't have no place to go. I think one church I think took them someplace. I don't know. They stayed there for several years I think, but we were lucky. We stayed with my brother for maybe about three months then we moved out from there. I was working in a department store.

MK: Originally when you folks—your family—came back though, you folks stayed with your brother?

JU: Mm-hmm. [yes]

MK: Is this the same brother that was a painter?

JU: Yeah, yeah.

MK: When Pearl Harbor . . .

JU: Pearl Harbor, yeah.

MK: What was he doing when you folks came back? What kind of work?

JU: He was at---no, he was still working at Pearl Harbor. He was still working. But later on, he changed his job and he went to Waiāhole Tunnel. Way up in Waiāhole. There's a ditch or something that irrigation goes to Waipahu sugar plantation or something. He used to be up there taking care of the irrigation system over there. When I came back he was still working at Pearl Harbor.

MK: During all of that time when you folks are in camps—Jerome, Tule Lake—what kind of communication did you have with your brother over here?

JU: No. Hardly anything. We hardly spoke to him. I don't know if we were allowed or we were not allowed. I don't know, but I remember we had . . .

MK: Hardly any contact.

JU: No. Yeah.

MK: What was it like? The family moving in with brother's family?

JU: The apartment they were living in was small and he had three children already. My brother had three children over there, so it was kind of crowded. So we felt uncomfortable. We wanted to move out as quickly as we can, but we stayed three months with them. Then the welfare gave us money to buy bed and refrigerator and so they gave us that. Nice of them. (Chuckles) They don't have to do that, you know, these disloyal Japanese people. (Laughs) But, like my father said, it's a good country. (Laughs)

MK: So where did you folks move to?

JU: We moved to Liliha Street. Then my father went to work for the Daijingu [Temple] with Reverend Kawasaki.

(Telephone rings.)

MK: We should let you answer the phone.

(Taping stops, the resumes.)

MK: . . . saying that you were the sole breadwinner in the beginning. From the time you folks lived with your brother, you started working.

JU: Yeah.

MK: What did you do at Fair Department Store?

JU: Salesclerk.

MK: Salesclerk? (JU laughs.) At that time were you assigned to certain goods or how did it work?

JU: I was in notions department. You know, small [word unclear] things and all those things. Notions department I was assigned.

MK: When you folks came back from the camp, how did your old friends or people who knew your family, how did they . . .

JU: I didn't see any of them. I didn't see any of them. Maybe they were still in Kaua'i, I don't know. But later on I found them though—some of them—my friends.

- MK: I think you said that your father eventually went to Daijingu? Helped Reverend Kawasaki.
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: Again, same kind of work that he did before?
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: But still continued to live in Liliha?
- JU: Yeah.
- MK: Then I think you mentioned that . . .
- JU: Yeah, he moved to another church later on. Yeah, there was Katō Jinja.
- MK: Katō Jinja.
- JU: Yeah. That's for Kumamoto[-*ken*] people you know.
- MK: Where was that?
- JU: Buckle Lane. You go in from Vineyard Street by the Salvation Army. Across there was a road going inside there. There used to be one teahouse too. Hananoya. (Laughs) They had Kimata Sewing School right there.
- WN: What was the name of the teahouse?
- JU: Hananoya.
- WN: Hananoya.
- JU: Yeah. (Chuckles) Flower. *Hana*.
- MK: A lot of people went to Kimata Sewing School yeah?
- JU: Yeah, they used to call, Practical Sewing School. Miss Kimata was the, you know . . .
- WN: Oh, it was called Practical Sewing School?
- JU: Practical Sewing School. That was the name, but then everyone used to say Kimata Sewing School because that was her name.
- MK: You worked at Fair Department Store about five years?
- JU: Five years, yeah.
- MK: I was wondering, since you had been doing kind of clerical work in the clothing department . . .
- JU: Yeah. (Chuckles)
- MK: Did any of that help when you went out to look for work or to do your work in Hawai'i?
- JU: No. (JU and MK laugh.)
- MK: Okay.

JU: I did sewing after that. After I got married I did drapery sewing yeah. Because I went to Kimata Sewing School. A night course I took. So, I worked for seventeen years . . .

MK: Wow.

JU: . . . sewing draperies for hotels. (Laughs)

MK: Was that for a drapery company?

JU: Yeah.

MK: And they supplied hotels with the curtains.

JU: Yeah.

MK: Then you got married in 1950. How did you meet your husband?

JU: (Laughs) Well, when I was going sewing school there was girls that I met. Day class too because the church was next door. There was some girls from Big Island—they stayed at Kimata Sewing School. They used to board over there. Our church was right next door so I became friends with them. The day class were having benefit dance at the armory. They used to get their armory down there.

WN: Downtown yeah?

JU: Yeah. (Laughs) And so, they were going to have a fashion show and then dance. So they had to sell ticket. They had to sell lots you know. I think this girl said she had to sell hundred I think or something. She couldn't sell much so she was asking me if I could help her. So I said yeah, I could help her.

She told me, "You know what, there's one guy that living down Hall Street." This small grocery store and they sell thread and zippers like that. "This guy is from Japan," they told me, "he speak only Japanese now, so if you can speak Japanese you go over there and sell him this ticket," because they always buy thread for me. He can at least buy some tickets for them.

So I said, "Okay, I'll try." And I went and I was talking Japanese to him, he was talking Japanese. He just came back from Japan [words unclear]. He was stationed Japan—Tokyo and Hokkaido. So, I don't know why he was only speaking Japanese when he came back. (Chuckles) And so, I thought he bought two ticket. I said, "I wonder if he know how to dance. I feel bad because he bought two ticket from me you know."

But he told me, "If you give me the last dance, I'm gonna buy the tickets from you."

I said, "Oh yeah, yeah." I feel that he not even going to show up. And why do I worry?

(Laughter)

You know what I mean? And then he bought two tickets from me. I said, "Maybe he has a girlfriend you know he bought two tickets." (Laughs) That was it, and the day came. The dance night. For sure he came looking for me you know.

MK: Oh.

JU: He was speaking---all around they're speaking English. So, he's speaking English. So I said, "Hey, you speak English!"

(Laughter)

"You fooled us!" And that's how we got acquainted and those days we used to go dances.

And so, a bunch of the girls used to go and they told me, “You know sometime we don’t have a ride yet so you go ask the guy.”

(Laughter)

Maybe he going to take us to go dancing. We used to go ‘Ewa side to dance.

MK: Oh, that’s a distance.

JU: Yeah. That’s why we need a car. (Laughs) If armory not so bad, we can go on the bus or something. So I asked him and he used to take us to go and that’s how I got acquainted with him.

MK: This is Richard Uehara?

JU: Yeah. No, his name was Inamine first. That’s his stepfather’s name. He went school and in the army too. He went Inamine, but his real father’s name was Uehara. So, his mom said, “When you get married I think you better change your name to your real father’s name.” When we got married, he went with Uehara.

MK: Earlier you were saying that he lived on a particular—the store was on a particular street?

JU: Hall Street.

MK: Hall Street.

JU: There’s no more Hall Street nowadays yeah.

WN: It’s in Pālama.

JU: Yeah.

WN: Yeah, they had Hall Saimin near there.

JU: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MK: Near there?

JU: Yeah. My mother-in-law used to run that *saimin*. (Laughs)

WN: Yeah?

JU: Hall Saimin, with another lady though. Another lady, partners.

WN: So Richard’s mother.

JU: Yeah.

MK: Oh, interesting. And you were saying he was a MIS [Military Intelligence Service] interpreter?

JU: Yeah.

MK: Well he got you folks fooled well yeah? (JU and MK laugh.) That’s kind of funny, you two speaking Japanese and both of you know English.

JU: We didn’t know he went to the army or anything. We just thought he was from Japan. (Laughs) That’s why he only speak Japanese we thought.

- WN: He was *kibei*?
- JU: No. Just local Maui boy.
- WM: Oh.
- JU: Pu'unēnē, Maui he came from.
- MK: So you folks got married in 1950?
- JU: Yes.
- MK: Now, how many children and grandchildren do you have?
- JU: I have four children and I have eighteen grandchildren and I have nineteen great-grandchildren. It's getting bigger. (JU and MK laugh.) Some of my grandchildren are expecting so, it's getting bigger and bigger.
- MK: Wow.
- JU: Many of my grandkids are not married yet, so if they get married and have children, wow.
- MK: Another big event in your life was getting citizenship.
- JU: Yes.
- MK: Tell us about that. How come you did that?
- JU: (Laughs) Well, I wanted to be a citizen. I lived here a long time already. Forget about Japan already. I love this country.
- MK: About when did you get your citizenship?
- JU: I think after I got married. [Nineteen] fifty-one or fifty-two I think.
- MK: You know, you kind of told us your life story. You told us about the wartime and what your family experienced. You told us about your life after the war. When you think about what your family went through during the war, what do you think?
- JU: (Chuckles) We're all so *shikata ga nai*, that's all they say yeah. But, for me it wasn't too bad. I don't hate America. I feel bad that they had to do that to us but you know. . . . It cannot be helped I guess.
- MK: Shall we end here?
- WN: Thank you so much.
- JU: I can say something?
- MK: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.
- WN: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.
- JU: I can read this?
- MK: Oh sure.
- WN: Yeah, sure.

JU: It was a big mistake for America. It was racial prejudice. No one should be deprived of their constitutional rights. I want the young generation to remember this and fight for your rights. And don't let this happen again. On the other hand, America has many wonderful qualities. You should be proud to be American and be a good citizen.

MK: That is an excellent message to your kids and grandkids and great-grandkids.

JU: I'm glad I could have helped a little bit.

WN: Thank you so much, this was really—your memory is really good.

MK: Thank you. Thank you.

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Unspoken Memories:

Oral Histories of Hawai‘i Internees at Jerome, Arkansas

Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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